



## NEWS RELEASE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### Two 4<sup>th</sup> of July Weekends Means Be Twice as Careful!!

Phoenix, ARIZ---June 28, 2007---This year could spell double trouble for Arizona firefighters as Fourth of July celebrants have their choice of two extended weekends to participate in outdoor activities. Fire danger is very high throughout much of Arizona and is approaching or at extreme in several areas. Humidity readings have been approaching zero at some remote weather stations and consistently in the single digits in much of the state. The low humidity, hot weather and winds coupled with low fuel moisture spell dangerous wildfire conditions and an increased chance of any start becoming a major wildfire.

Fuel moisture levels are at critical season lows with 1000-hour fuel readings less than 10 per cent across most of the state. These fuels are the large limbs and small logs 3-8" in diameter that help feed a wildfire. Kiln-dried boards from your local lumber yard have more moisture in them. Grass and other fine fuels are well below 5 per cent which is as tinder dry as paper. Compounding the problems in fine fuels is the introduction of non-native grasses such as buffelgrass.

Buffelgrass, an innocuous sounding species, is the cause of an ongoing fire behavior advisory. This warning to firefighters and the public in general is due to heavy fine fuel loading and the potential for more active fire behavior. Buffelgrass is a perennial grass that carries over year after year spreading along roads, rights-of-way, and disturbed areas. It is spreading at a rapid rate in Pima County, doubling each year, and is common and increasing in the Phoenix area.

Fires in grass and other fine fuels are usually caused by careless smokers, catalytic mufflers, power equipment such as welders, or improper spark arrestors. Fire starts in buffelgrass could result in faster spreading and more destructive desert fires. The grass can grow on steep and hotter south slopes where there are normally lighter fuels. It is also found in wildland urban interface areas increasing the risk to property and public safety. During initial burning periods, the average rate of fire spread is predicted to be 2-8 mph on flat ground, without any wind at all—humans walk an average of 3-4 mph—you can't outrun these fires!!

Campfire and smoking restrictions are in effect as follows: (new restrictions are **bolded**)

**Bureau of Land Management Administered Lands**---Lands managed by the Phoenix District Office, the Yuma-Lake Havasu Field Offices, and the Kingman Field Office. (Yuma-Lake Havasu allows the use of charcoal in designated developed recreation and other improved sites using a commercially manufactured grill or a grill provided at the site.) BLM lands within the Arizona Strip District including the Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument, Vermillion Cliffs National Monument, except for developed campgrounds and administrative sites. **The Gila District of the BLM will implement campfire and smoking restrictions beginning Saturday 6/30.**

**National Forest Lands**---On 6/29, the Prescott National will close the Horsethief Basin Recreation Area and the Apache-Sitgreaves NF has closed the Promontory Butte Area to all public entry. Kaibab, Coconino, Prescott, Apache-Sitgreaves, and Tonto National Forests have implemented restrictions. **The Coronado NF will implement campfire and smoking restrictions on June 30<sup>th</sup>.** The, Coconino, Kaibab and Prescott National Forests are in "Stage 2"

fire restrictions. Stage 2 prohibits the use of chainsaws, internal combustion engines, welding, and motor vehicles off developed roads. The Cinder Hills Off-Highway Vehicle Area north of Flagstaff remains open.

**US Fish and Wildlife Service**---Year-around fire restrictions are in effect along the Colorado River within the Imperial, Cibola, Bill Williams River, and Havasu National Wildlife Refuges. Restrictions are also in effect within the KOFA National Wildlife Refuge.

**National Park Service**--- Grand Canyon National Park, National Park Service-managed portions of the Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument. **Saguaro NP will implement campfire and smoking restrictions along with the Coronado NF June 30th.**

**Tribal Lands/BIA**--- San Carlos Apache Tribal lands.

**State of Arizona**---Lands managed by the Arizona State Land Department within Apache, Coconino, Navajo, Gila, La Paz, Maricopa, Mohave, Pinal, Yavapai, and Yuma counties.

**Private Lands**---Fire and/or smoking restrictions could be in effect on some private lands within Arizona. Fire Districts or County officials may have already implemented restrictions. If you are unsure whether you are allowed a backyard fire, contact your local Fire District or County office.

**When fire restrictions and closures are in effect for large parts of Arizona, individual units may implement changes at any time. It is impossible to list all fire restrictions, so please call ahead to the local office where you plan on visiting or working to get the most up-to-date information or visit their website to see the latest maps.** Fire restriction and closure information can also be found on websites [www.azfireinfo.com](http://www.azfireinfo.com) and <http://gacc.nifc.gov/swcc/> or by calling toll-free 1-877-864-6985.

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